

POLICE/SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT		RULES AND REGULATIONS	
SUBJECT: Firearms		NUMBER: 1-18	
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 1999		REVIEW DATE:	
AMENDS/SUPERSEDES: RR 1-18, June 1988		APPROVED: _____ Chief of Police/Sheriff	
CALEA STANDARDS: 1.3, 72.4.1, 72.9.6, 73.3.1		VLESPC STANDARDS: ADM.06.01	

NOTE

This order is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an officer's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third-party claims. Violations of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

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I. POLICY

An officer's firearm is perhaps the most commonly-perceived symbol of his or her authority and role. In fact, every contact with a citizen is an armed encounter because the officer always carries a loaded firearm. In the interest of public safety, the department sets high standards of performance for its personnel who use weapons. The department's policy ensures that members are properly trained not only in the use of appropriate firearms and the circumstances of their use, but also in their safety and maintenance, regarding both on- and off-duty weapons. Supervisors and the department armorer shall rigorously enforce departmental firearms standards.

All sworn personnel shall qualify annually with his or her issued firearms twice, using the highest score for the record. This score, and any scores used by the department for the record shall be fired on an approved range under the supervision of a certified firearms instructor. Firearms qualification is a combination of **skill** and **discretion**: when to shoot is

perhaps a more important question than how to shoot. Officers shall review GO 2-6 (use of force) frequently.

II. PURPOSE

To establish policy and procedures governing the care and maintenance of issued weapons, the selection and use of holsters, off-duty weapons, firearms training, and qualification.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Issuance of weapons

1. The armorer or firearms instructor, if appropriate, shall issue departmental weapons to authorized personnel.
2. Departmental firearms which become unserviceable or are no longer needed shall be returned to the armorer.
3. Department service revolvers must be of a caliber of at least .38, not to exceed .357 magnum. The department also authorizes the 9mm semiautomatic pistol.

B. Security of weapons

Officers are responsible for the care, cleaning, and security of departmental weapons issued to them. Officers shall report any weapon malfunction to the chief of police/sheriff via the armorer.

C. Departmental armorer

The duties of the armorer are as follows:

1. Maintain non-issued departmental weapons and associated equipment.
2. Inspect all weapons being returned to the armory to ensure they are clean and serviceable.
3. Repair all returned malfunctioning weapons.
4. Maintain records of issuance, care, and maintenance of departmental weapons and associated items.
5. Issue departmental ammunition.
6. Inspect and certify as serviceable personally-owned firearms that are authorized for on- or off-duty use.

7. Inspect and authorize the use of holsters for off-duty use and for on-duty use if the officer prefers to use a holster other than one issued by the department.
8. Inspect all weapons used by officers both on and off duty at each qualification shoot.
9. The armorer shall maintain a record of all firearms which have been certified as safe and with which officers have qualified. This record shall include the following:
 - a. Officer's name and identification number.
 - b. Make and model of weapon.
 - c. Serial number of weapon.
10. The armorer shall be a firearms instructor certified by the Department of Criminal Justice Services. Other officers may be certified as firearms instructors yet they are not assigned the armorer's duties.

D. Modification of weapons

1. Departmental weapons shall not be modified or altered without written approval of the chief of police/sheriff except as outlined.
2. Substitution of grips
 - a. Grips shall be of high quality wood, rubber, or polyurethane.
 - b. Grips shall be the color of the natural wood, or plain black or brown.
 - c. Target-style grips, or any grips which interfere with the speed loading of the weapon are not authorized.
3. Modification of privately-owned weapons designated by officers as duty weapons.
 - a. Substitution of grips as outlined in 2.b above is authorized.
 - b. Trigger shoes are prohibited.

E. Firearms inspections

1. Although either the firearms instructor or the armorer shall thoroughly inspect each weapon during qualification on the range, sergeants shall inspect

subordinate officers' issued firearms monthly to ensure that they are maintained in a clean and serviceable condition.

- a. Firearms inspections shall include sidearms, shotguns, authorized rifles, ammunition pouches, and holsters.
- b. Ammunition shall be inspected to ensure that it is of departmental issue, of correct quantity, and in serviceable condition.
- c. Upon completion of inspections, the sergeant shall forward a memorandum to the chief of police/sheriff that documents the following information:
 - (1) The date the inspection was held.
 - (2) The name of each officer inspected.
 - (3) The findings of the inspection.

F. Off-duty weapons

1. Off-duty weapons, either revolvers or semi-automatic pistols, and their ammunition, are purchased at the officer's expense. The armorer shall inspect and certify the off-duty weapon before it may be carried. Revolvers and semi-automatics shall not exceed .44 caliber.
 - a. Officers shall qualify with the off-duty weapon twice at the annual qualification (see IV.A.8 below for further explanation).
 - b. The armorer shall approve any concealed holster for an off-duty weapon.
 - c. The armorer shall maintain a record of all holsters and weapons used by each officer.
2. Officers may carry, while off duty, either an issued weapon or one purchased at officers' expense, subject to the controls listed above.
3. Officers **may** not carry weapons when socially inappropriate (e.g., at a sports event), and **shall** not when consuming alcoholic beverages.
 - a. Off-duty weapons shall be carried safely and concealed from public view.

IV. PROCEDURES - QUALIFICATION

A. Qualification rules

1. The firearms instructor or armorer shall be in charge at all times when officers are on the firing range for qualification. *[Note: State whether qualification with privately-purchased off-duty weapons shall take place during the annual qualification or at another time.]*
2. Only weapons and ammunition issued by the department shall be used during qualifications, except for officers who use their own weapons while on duty (which fire issued ammunition) or if qualifying with off-duty weapons.
3. No smoking, drinking, eating, or chewing tobacco shall be permitted in the firing lanes.
4. Officers waiting to shoot shall remain outside the immediate firing area (behind the 25-yard line or 50-yard line, whichever is greater).
5. Persons who are not participating officers shall not be allowed nearer the shooting area than the parking lot, except by the approval of the firearms instructor or armorer.
6. Horseplay shall not be permitted on the firing range. Anyone engaged in horseplay shall be asked to leave the range, and the firearms instructor or armorer shall write a report to the chief of police/sheriff detailing the circumstances.
7. Every officer shall fire the regular firearms course approved by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. *[Note: Consult the DCJS document, Performance Outcomes, Training Objectives Criteria and Lesson Plan Guides for Compulsory Minimum Training for Law Enforcement Officers, December, 1997, for guidance on qualification. Performance outcomes 7.1-7.6 address several relevant topics from using, cleaning, transporting, and security of firearms, to qualification protocol, to off-duty firearms.]*
8. Officers shall not be permitted to attempt to shoot numerous times before actually qualifying. Rather, out of every six attempts, officers shall qualify three times or twice in a row. Officers who fail to qualify shall be placed in remedial training as soon as practicable and shall be removed from patrol or investigative duties until the standards expressed herein are met. Officers who cannot qualify within fifteen days of the original qualification shall be subject to administrative termination.
9. The armorer or firearms instructor shall inspect **all** weapons before firing to (1) ascertain that weapons are safe and (2) to ensure that weapons are properly maintained.

B. Safety

1. Before going to the shooting line, each officer shall wear approved protection for eyes and ears.
2. All weapons and ammunition pouches/speed loaders shall be emptied within the firing range upon command and under supervision of the firearms instructor or armorer. The instructor or armorer shall instruct all shooters on range safety procedures before the qualification takes place.
3. Once weapons have been emptied, they shall remain in holsters until officers have taken positions on the firing line and the firearms instructor has given permission to "dry fire" or "load with ammunition."
4. Once a shooting phase has begun, weapons shall be kept pointed down range, and officers shall remain facing their targets. An officer shall raise his hands to draw the instructor's attention if he or she misunderstands a command.
5. In case of a misfire, keep the weapon pointed down range for at least 10 seconds (in case of a delayed reaction) before opening the cylinder or removing a clip and inspecting the chamber, as appropriate to the weapon. Never attempt to fire the next round without first having the firearms instructor or armorer check the weapon.
6. At no time shall anyone go beyond the firing line until it is safe, and then only when the firearms instructor or armorer gives the command.
7. Keep the trigger finger out of the trigger guard and away from the trigger until the weapon is pointed down range.
8. With the cylinder or chamber open, always check the weapon twice to make sure it is unloaded.

C. Shotgun

1. Every officer may pass the shotgun qualification course before carrying a department-issued shotgun.
2. The qualification course shall include:
 - a. Knowing how to load and unload the shotgun combat style.
 - b. Firing at least 10 shots, some from different positions.

3. The ammunition chamber shall be left open and the safety on until instructed by the firearms instructor or armorer to load or check the weapon.
4. Shotguns shall not be handled except on the command of the firearms instructor or armorer.

D. Classroom instruction

1. All department personnel shall, if duties require carrying firearms, receive classroom familiarization with their firearms before obtaining permission from the firearms instructor to enter the firing range. Classroom training shall cover the mechanics of the weapon (stripping, lubricating, nomenclature, troubleshooting, misfires), sound safety practices, and departmental policy governing the use of force. Tactical considerations shall be a part of this training, such as the use of verbal commands, shooting in various postures and positions, handling multiple suspects.
2. Officers must pass a short examination on the use of force to demonstrate an understanding of law and policy before qualifying on the range. Officers who fail the examination shall not be permitted to qualify until they pass (after receiving remedial training). Topics covered include shoot/don't shoot issues and the use-of-force continuum. Once the examination has been passed, officers must demonstrate minimum acceptable performance with each weapon they carry.